

November 2003

1.7

Response to Text

Benchmarks

In responses to literature, students show understanding of reading, connect what has been read to the broader world of ideas, concepts, and issues, and make judgments about the text. This is evident when students:

PreK-4:

- A. Connect plot/ideas/concepts to experience, including other literature;
- B. Go beyond retelling of plot by reflecting on what is read and making connections to broader ideas, concepts, and issues;
- C. Support judgments about what has been read by drawing from experience, other literature, and evidence from the text, including direct quotations.

5-8: Evidence PreK-4 applies, plus -

- D. Clearly articulate a point of view, or state a firm judgment about the piece discussed;
- E. Engage the reader effectively and provide closure;
- F. Maintain a sense of audience by addressing the reader's possible questions.

9-12: Evidence PreK – 8 applies, plus –

- G. Establish interpretive claims and support them.

8th Grade Benchmarks

“The Scarlet Letter: A Literary Analysis”	5 / 3
“To Kill a Mockingbird: A Simple Love Story”	4 / 3
“Response to Across Five Aprils”	4 / 3
“Response to the Diary of Anne Frank”	3 / 3
“Of Mice and Men”	3 / 2
“The Giver”	2 / 3
“My Response to Literature”	2 / 3
“Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul”	1 / 1

Vermont Department of Education
**VERMONT NEW STANDARDS RUBRIC FOR
 RESPONSES TO TEXT**

Standard 1.7 In responses to text, students show understanding of reading, connect what has been read to the broader world of ideas, concepts, and issues, and make judgments about the text.

Criteria	Score Point 5 Exceeds the Standard	Score Point 4 Accomplished Writing	Score Point 3 Intermediate Writing	Score Point 2 Basic Writing	Score Point 1 Limited Writing
PURPOSE, STANCE, VOICE/TONE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of understanding and reflection that are related to the text Analysis of the elements of the work under consideration Personal response to the work of literature. Sentence structure, variety, and vocabulary. 	<p>Score point 5 meets all the criteria listed in score point 4 and shows invention, creativity, and lucidity.</p> <p>Presents insightful ideas.</p> <p>Demonstrates strong sense of personal engagement in responding to the work of literature.</p> <p>Sophisticated sentence structure and imagery; language is often metaphorical or otherwise distinctive.</p>	<p>Responds directly to the text with analysis and personal response.</p> <p>Strong control of purpose, appropriate to topic and audience.</p> <p>Clearly establishes context (purpose).</p> <p>Uses effective sentence patterns and diction (voice/tone).</p>	<p>Responds to the text, providing some evidence of analysis and personal response.</p> <p>Sense of purpose may be uneven or confined to providing a summary.</p> <p>Context limited to that of a book report or personal response (purpose).</p> <p>Uses appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure (voice/tone).</p>	<p>Responds to the text with a general summary or retelling and may have little evidence of analysis (purpose).</p> <p>Response to text may show some misunderstanding.</p> <p>Attempts to establish a context (purpose).</p> <p>Ideas usually consist of generalities.</p> <p>Vocabulary and sentence structure are generally pedestrian and generic (voice/tone).</p>	<p>Responds to the text with little or no analysis. Misunderstood or incomplete retelling (purpose).</p> <p>No context (purpose).</p> <p>Uses basic vocabulary and simple sentences; may have some inappropriate word choices (voice/tone).</p>
ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall coherence Information and ideas presented in logical, cohesive fashion 	<p>Not only logical and coherent, but organized so that the writer's own ideas are clearly related to specific points in the work of literature.</p>	<p>Has clear, consistent coherence and organization.</p>	<p>Organizes ideas appropriate to topic and purpose (organization).</p>	<p>Shows coherence, but may have minor digressions (organization).</p> <p>Sufficiently organized for reader to follow ideas (organization).</p>	<p>Shows little or no evidence of purposeful organization. May be brief or, in longer papers, lack coherence.</p> <p>Reader may not be able to follow writer's line of thinking (organization).</p>
ELABORATION STRATEGIES, DETAILS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific concrete details with appropriate citations from text to support writer's point of view Comparing Explaining writer's response to the work 	<p>Elaborates using striking imagery or metaphors.</p>	<p>Elaborates using concrete language and details.</p> <p>Writer supports ideas with specific references to text (detail).</p> <p>References to text are supported by specific citations (detail).</p>	<p>Ideas are elaborated effectively, using some specific, concrete details.</p> <p>Elaboration may not be clearly related to the text (detail).</p> <p>References to text are general, or may not be supported by citations (detail)</p>	<p>Shows little purposeful use of strategies for elaboration (detail)</p> <p>Elaboration may be limited to lists of details or generalities.</p> <p>May not make specific reference to text (detail).</p>	<p>No attempt to elaborate or may attempt to elaborate by repetition of initial statement (detail).</p>

This rubric is adapted from materials created by the New Standards Project.

RESPONSES TO TEXT

Responses to Text: Standard 1.7 In written responses to text, students show understanding of reading; connect what has been read to the broader world of ideas, concepts, and issues; and make judgments about the text. This is evident when students: (PreK - 4) **a.** Connect plot/ideas/concepts to experience, including other literature; **b.** Go beyond retelling of plot by reflecting on what is read and making connections to broader ideas, concepts, and issues; **c.** Support judgments about what has been read by drawing from experience, other literature, and evidence from the text, including direct quotations; (5 – 8) **d.** Clearly articulate a point of view, or state a firm judgment about the piece discussed; **e.** Engage the reader effectively and provide closure; **f.** Maintain a sense of audience by addressing the reader’s possible questions; (9 – 12) **g.** Establish interpretive claims and support them.

RESPONSES TO TEXT – Writing in which the author reacts to the content, ideas, action, characters, plot, theme, or other elements within a piece of text.

GLOSSARY

Analysis – A separating of a whole into its parts with an examination of these parts to find out their nature and function.

Citation – A direct quote from the text.

Coherence – The quality achieved when all the ideas are clearly arranged and connected.

Context – The set of facts or circumstances surrounding an event or a situation.

Diction – The writer’s choice of words based on their effectiveness.

Elaboration – The development and expansion of ideas and arguments. Both logical (evidence, reasons, facts and statistics) and emotional appeals can be used.

Focus – The concentration on a specific topic to give it emphasis or clarity.

Occasion – The happening or event that makes the response possible.

Pedestrian – Commonplace; usual.

Purpose – The specific reason for writing; the goal of the writing (to entertain, express, inform, explain, persuade, etc.). Purpose has to do with the topic the writer is addressing, its central idea, theme, or message.

Reference to Text – Mentioning or alluding to something in the text without directly quoting the text (Ex. Pip was frightened when he met the convict in the graveyard.)

Retelling - a restatement of the events in the story.

Stance – The attitude or position of the author.

Thesis- A sentence that announces the writer’s main, unifying, controlling idea about a topic. A thesis statement usually contains two main elements: a limited subject (Internet) and the reason for it - the “why”- (The Internet is a good resource.).

Tone – The writer’s attitude toward the subject. This can be serious, sarcastic, solemn, objective; tongue-in-cheek, etc.

Topic – The specific subject covered in a piece of writing.

Voice – The style and quality of the writing. Voice portrays the author’s personality or the personality of a persona. A distinctive voice establishes personal expression and enhances the writing.

HINT – When looking at a response to text, if the piece is simply a summary of the text or what happened in the story, with no exploration of ideas, it is a retelling. A good response tells “why” the student wrote or the student’s thoughts about the text. These must demonstrate understanding of the piece. The analysis expands and supports the “why.”

A simple retelling of the story or a summary of the text is a score point two.

The Scarlet Letter: A Literary Analysis

After reading Nathaniel Hawthorne's American classic *The Scarlet Letter*, I have pondered the use and significance of the letter "A". Close to the end of the book, Hawthorne suggests that maybe the letter stood for "able" or "angel". It has also been suggested that the letter "A" stands for alienation. I believe that the one that best represents the letter "A" is able. Hester (the main character) has proved that she has the ability to get through whatever life throws at her. I believe that she is an admirable and able person.

The first way that Hester is a very able person, is how she raises Pearl (her daughter) to the best of her ability. When I first started reading the book, I didn't think that Hester would be a very good mother, because she didn't seem to care very much about Pearl and her well being. I learned that Hester was a very good mother, who gave her daughter a very defined sense of right and wrong. For example, when Pearl is asking her mother who sent her to Hester, and Pearl says, "He did not send me! I have no heavenly father!". Hester says, in response, "Hush, Pearl, hush! He sent us all into this world. He even sent me, thy mother!". This shows how Hester wants Pearl to believe in God, which is the Puritan way, even though her faith may be wavering a bit. Another example of what a good mother Hester is, is when she is offered to be taken to the forest and see the devil, after she has been conferring with the men of town all day about Pearl. Her response to the invitation is, "Make my excuse to him, so please you! I must tarry at home and keep watch over my little Pearl. Had they taken her from me, I would willingly have gone with thee into the forest and signed my name in the Black Man's book too, and that with mine own blood!". This shows what a devoted and caring mother she is to Pearl.

Another place where Hester shows us her ableness is how she becomes a better person as a result of the scarlet letter. I think it helped her realize what is right and wrong. It also allows her to become more independent and have opinions of her own. After she stood on the platform, she had a lot of time to think and contemplate right and wrong, which I think that she did. Because of all her alienation, she got to examine human nature from an outsiders point of view. That caused her to think and maybe examine her own actions. After that she has a very clear sense of right and wrong and become a better person. An example of that is when she is fighting to keep Pearl and she says, “He gave her in requital of all things else, which he has taken from me. She is my happiness! –she is my torture, none the less!...See ye not, she is the scarlet letter, only capable loved, and so endowed with a million-fold the power of retribution for my sin?”. This shows how she realizes what she has done wrong and that she needs to handle with the consequences of her sin. In this case, her consequence is Pearl.

My last example of how able Hester is, is how she is able to change her place in the community from one scorned, to one that is known for kindness and generosity. When she first gets the scarlet letter, the townspeople look down upon her. After a few years, when Hester had shown her kindness, they began to realize what a kind-hearted person she is. She would do all of their fancy sewing and embroidery that they needed done, and dress in rags herself. The only thing close to her that she spoiled was her little Pearl. She would make beautiful clothes for Pearl, so the towns people could see that she is just as good as them. Finally the townspeople look at her and see, “Such helpfulness was found in her, -so much power to do, and power to sympathize, -that many people

refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength." That shows that many people, when thinking of Hester, thought of someone who was kind and helpful.

After reading this, I hope you see what an admirable person Hester Prynne is. Even though she has messed up her life she takes the second chance that is given to her and, in my opinion, becomes a better person in the end. Throughout the book she showed what an able person she was by bringing up Pearl very well, changing people's views of her, developing a better sense of right and wrong than she did before, and many more. Hester was a very able person and made the best of the situation she was in.

Title establishes analytical purpose

The Scarlet Letter: A Literary Analysis

After reading Nathaniel Hawthorne’s American classic *The Scarlet Letter*, I have pondered the use and significance of the letter “A”. Close to the end of the book, Hawthorne suggests that maybe the letter stood for “able” or “angel”. It has also been suggested that the letter “A” stands for alienation. I believe that the one that best represents the letter “A” is able. Hester (the main character) has proved that she has the ability to get through whatever life throws at her. I believe that she is an admirable and able person.

Clear context

Focus on character analysis; support

The first way that Hester is a very able person, is how she raises Pearl (her daughter) to the best of her ability. When I first started reading the book, I didn’t think that Hester would be a very good mother, because she didn’t seem to care very much about Pearl and her well being. I learned that Hester was a very good mother, who gave her daughter a very defined sense of right and wrong. For example, when Pearl is asking her mother who sent her to Hester, and Pearl says, “He did not send me! I have no heavenly father!”. Hester says, in response, “Hush, Pearl, hush! He sent us all into this world. He even sent me, thy mother!”. This shows how Hester wants Pearl to believe in God, which is the Puritan way, even though her faith may be wavering a bit. Another example of what a good mother Hester is, is when she is offered to be taken to the forest and see the devil, after she has been conferring with the men of town all day about Pearl. Her response to the invitation is, “Make my excuse to him, so please you! I must tarry at home and keep watch over my little Pearl. Had they taken her from me, I would willingly have gone with thee into the forest and signed my name in the Black Man’s book too, and that with mine own blood!”. This shows what a devoted and caring mother she is to Pearl.

Writer demonstrates a strong sense of personal engagement with the text

Two examples of analysis and personal response, supported by citations from the text

Another place where Hester shows us her ableness is how she becomes a better person as a result of the scarlet letter. I think it helped her realize what is right and wrong. It also allows her to become more independent and have opinions of her

Support for focus, followed by personal response and reference to text

own. After she stood on the platform, she had a lot of time to think and contemplate right and wrong, which I think that she did. Because of all her alienation, she got to examine human nature from an outsiders point of view. That caused her to think and maybe examine her own actions. After that she has a very clear sense of right and wrong and become a better person. An example of that is when she is fighting to keep Pearl and she says, “He gave her in requital of all things else, which he has taken from me. She is my happiness! –she is my torture, none the less!...See ye not, she is the scarlet letter, only capable loved, and so endowed with a million-fold the power of retribution for my sin?”. This shows how she realizes what she has done wrong and that she needs to handle with the consequences of her sin. In this case, her consequence is Pearl.

Writer’s analysis of character is insightful

My last example of how able Hester is, is how she is able to change her placer in the community from one scorned, to one that is known for kindness and generosity. When she first gets the scarlet letter, the townspeople look down upon her. After a few years, when Hester had shown her kindness, they began to realize what a kind-hearted person she is. She would do all of their fancy sewing and embroidery that they needed done, and dress in rags herself. The only thing close to her that she spoiled was her little Pearl. She would make beautiful clothes for Pearl, so the towns people could see that she is just as good as them. Finally the townspeople look at her and see, “Such helpfulness was found in her, -so much power to do, and power to sympathize, -that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman’s strength.” That shows that many people, when thinking of Hester, thought of someone who was kind and helpful.

Support for focus, followed by specific reference to text and personal response

Citation supports analytical focus

After reading this, I hope you see what an admirable person Hester Prynne is. Even though she has messed up her life she takes the second chance that is given to her and, in my opinion, becomes a better person in the end. Throughout the book she showed what an able person she was by bringing up Pearl very well, changing

Personal response

people's views of her, developing a better sense of right and wrong than she did before, and many more. Hester was a very able person and made the best of the situation she was in. ← *Repetition of focus*

Score Point 5

In this strongly focused response to text, the writer's own ideas are clearly related to specific points in the work of literature. The writer uses effective sentence patterns and diction and clearly organizes the ideas to support the character analysis. The writing presents insightful ideas and a strong sense of personal engagement in responding to the character of Hester Prynne.

Conventions – Score Point 3

The writing demonstrates control of grade-level conventions.

To Kill a Mockingbird: “A Simple Love Story”

In life, there are tragedies and people suffer of awful things. But most of us seem to overcome these tragedies. Love is something that helps us overcome such suffering, because love is one of those things that helps us carry on in life, even if love is hidden or disguised.

This is exactly what we see in To Kill a Mockingbird, written by Harper Lee. The story deals with so many issues and conflicts in human society, but love ties the story together with these issues (although you may not be able to see it clearly until the end). You will see that this book, To Kill a Mockingbird, which takes place in a little town in Alabama called Maycomb, is simply a *love story*.

Perhaps one of the most obvious and frequent examples of love holding a society/community together is the love and respect that Atticus Finch (father of Scout Finch who is the main character and narrator) has for all living things and for the community in which he lives in. In one part of the book, Atticus is forced to shoot a sick, dangerous dog. But he doesn't want to do this. He feels it is wrong to have certain advantages over other living things. In the story Miss Maudie (a lady who lives on the same street as the Finch's) says to Scout, “If your father's anything, he's civilized in his heart.” Atticus really follows through with this statement throughout the whole book. Perhaps one of the greatest lines that Atticus says, is when he is trying to explain one of life's morals to his son, Jem Finch. Jem has just received a rifle as a gift. Atticus says, “Shoot all the blue jays you want, hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mocking bird.” The reason Atticus is saying this is because mockingbirds don't do anything but make music for people to enjoy. Atticus simply has much respect and love for all.

Another example of how love prevails in the story, is the love that the black people have for each other in their community and the respect they show for those who are courteous towards them. Atticus is a lawyer who takes a case about a black man named Tom Robinson who is accused of raping a 19 year old white girl. Atticus loses the trial, but he knows, and the blacks of Maycomb know that he did the right thing by taking the case. Knowing this and being very grateful, the black people show their gratitude by bringing the Finch's homemade food. They have such love for their community, and they care a lot for Tom Robinson. They also know that Tom was innocent. The verdict of the trial was heartbreaking but they carry on with love and hope.

One of the most touching examples of this idea of love is the relationship between Scout and Jem Finch. In the beginning of the story Jem and Scout are real close. They do everything together. They play all sorts of games and activities together. The way they relate to each other is the way that all siblings wish they could relate. They kind of look out for each other. Jem, Scout, and Dill (their friend who comes to Maycomb in the summer) had just tried to get the neighborhood spook, Arthur Radley, most well known as Boo Radley, to come out of his house. While trying to escape from the Radley's yard, Jem's pants get caught on the gate, so he has to slip out of them. Later that night Jem decides that he needs to go back for them. Scout thinks this is a terrible idea. She pleads with him to stay.

“I’m goin’ after ‘em,” Jem said.

“You can’t. I won’t let you, Scout said...

“Then I’m going with you,” Scout choked. As you see, Scout is trying to look

after Jem. But later on in the story, Jem starts to mature, and he is not interested in the same things as Scout. But that special love still remains.

You're beginning to see how love ties into this story. But the *love story* would not be a love story without the Boo Radley plot! Throughout the whole story Boo plays a very important part. His existence is very crucial to the story and he is mentioned in just about every chapter. But we don't see this until the very end. Until the end, he's merely just a neighborhood spook that the Finch kids and Dill pester, because he never comes out of his home. But one night, Jem and Scout are attacked and Boo comes to their rescue. From the Finches, Scout and Boo walk to the Radley's. Scout stands on the Radley's porch, and looks at her neighborhood from a position she's never seen before. Then she realizes something. "Winter, and his children shivered at the front gate, silhouetted against a blazing house Summer, and he watched his children's heart break. Autumn again, and Boo's children needed him." She realizes that all along, all this time, Boo has been watching, following, and caring for Scout and Jem (his children). He'd been their all along. He loved his children!

As you can see, the story really unfolds to be a "simple love story". But I've only told you of the few memorable parts that are so touching, and moving. You just have to see for yourself, and read the book, To Kill a Mockingbird, the "simple love story".

Standard 1.7
Grade 8 Response to Text
Score Point – 4 / 3

Focus clearly stated in title

To Kill a Mockingbird: “A Simple Love Story”

In life, there are tragedies and people suffer of awful things. But most of us seem to overcome these tragedies. Love is something that helps us overcome such suffering, because love is one of those things that helps us carry on in life, even if love is hidden or disguised.

Introduction has lead/hook, related to theme

This is exactly what we see in To Kill a Mockingbird, written by Harper Lee. The story deals with so many issues and conflicts in human society, but love ties the story together with these issues (although you may not be able to see it clearly until the end). You will see that this book, To Kill a Mockingbird, which takes place in a little town in Alabama called Maycomb, is simply a love story.

Focus relates to theme

Perhaps one of the most obvious and frequent examples of love holding a society/community together is the love and respect that Atticus Finch (father of Scout Finch who is the main character and narrator) has for all living things and for the community in which he lives in. In one part of the book, Atticus is forced to shoot a sick, dangerous dog. But he doesn't want to do this. He feels it is wrong to have certain advantages over other living things. In the story Miss Maudie (a lady who lives on the same street as the Finch's) says to Scout, “If your father's anything, he's civilized in his heart.” Atticus really follows through with this statement throughout the whole book. Perhaps one of the greatest lines that Atticus says, is when he is trying to explain one of life's morals to his son, Jem Finch. Jem has just received a rifle as a gift. Atticus says, “Shoot all the blue jays you want, hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mocking bird.” The reason Atticus is saying this is because mockingbirds don't do anything but make music for people to enjoy. Atticus simply has much respect and love for all.

Support for focus, followed by specific reference to text and citation

Context throughout given in parentheses

Transition to second example about Atticus' love

Another example of how love prevails in the story, is the love that the black people have for each other in their community and the respect they show for those who are courteous towards them. Atticus is a lawyer who takes a case about a

Support for focus, followed by specific reference to text

black man named Tom Robinson who is accused of raping a 19 year old white girl. Atticus loses the trial, but he knows, and the blacks of Maycomb know that he did the right thing by taking the case. Knowing this and being very grateful, the black people show their gratitude by bringing the Finch's homemade food. They have such love for their community, and they care a lot for Tom Robinson. They also know that Tom was innocent. The verdict of the trial was heartbreaking but they carry on with love and hope.

*Specific references
to text support
focus/example*

One of the most touching examples of this idea of love is the relationship between Scout and Jem Finch. In the beginning of the story Jem and Scout are real close. They do everything together. They play all sorts of games and activities together. The way they relate to each other is the way that all siblings wish they could relate. They kind of look out for each other. Jem, Scout, and Dill (their friend who comes to Maycomb in the summer) had just tried to get the neighborhood spook, Arthur Radley, most well known as Boo Radley, to come out of his house. While trying to escape from the Radley's yard, Jem's pants get caught on the gate, so he has to slip out of them. Later that night Jem decides that he needs to go back for them. Scout thinks this is a terrible idea. She pleads with him to stay.

*Third
example/support
for focus concerns
relationship
between Jem and
Scout*

"I'm goin' after 'em," Jem said.

"You can't. I won't let you, Scout said...

"Then I'm going with you," Scout choked. As you see, Scout is trying to

*Citation from text
supports focus/example*

look after Jem. But later on in the story, Jem starts to mature, and he is not interested in the same things as Scout. But that special love still remains.

You're beginning to see how love ties into this story. But the love story would not be a love story without the Boo Radley plot! Throughout the whole story Boo plays a very important part. His existence is very crucial to the story and he is mentioned in just about every chapter. But we don't see this until the very end. Until the end, he's merely just a neighborhood spook that the Finch kids and Dill pester, because he never comes out of his home. But one night, Jem and Scout are attacked

*Last example is strongest
support for focus*

and Boo comes to their rescue. From the Finches, Scout and Boo walk to the Radley's. Scout stands on the Radley's porch, and looks at her neighborhood from a position she's never seen before. Then she realizes something. "Winter, and his children shivered at the front gate, silhouetted against a blazing house Summer, and he watched his children's heart break. Autumn again, and Boo's children needed him." She realizes that all along, all this time, Boo has been watching, following, and caring for Scout and Jem (his children). He'd been their all along. He loved his children!

*Specific citation
supports focus/example*

As you can see, the story really unfolds to be a "simple love story". But I've only told you of the few memorable parts that are so touching, and moving. You just have to see for yourself, and read the book, To Kill a Mockingbird, the "simple love story".

Score Point 4

This response has a strong analytical focus ("the love story") with personal response embedded in the language throughout. The focus is supported by four specific examples (the love demonstrated by Atticus, the black community, Jem and Scout, and Boo Radley). The examples are elaborated with specific references to text and citations.

Conventions – Score Point 3

The writing demonstrates control of grade-level conventions.

Response to *Across Five Aprils*

I recently read the book *Across Five Aprils* by Irene Hunt. This book takes place in southern Illinois on a farm during the civil war. The main character is a nine-year-old boy named Jethro. Throughout this book, he is faced with many difficult aspects of the war. He feels pressured to work well on the farm and take up all the responsibilities of being the only boy/man to work on the farm after his brothers leave for the war and his father has a heart attack. During the events that happen throughout this book and the war, Jethro matures a lot. He's able to take up the responsibilities of becoming a man. He shows his maturity these three ways.

The first time Jethro shows a great amount of maturity is when his father allows him to go to Newton all by himself. He hitches up their wagon and rides fifteen miles into town. It gives him a great feeling to know that his father trusts him that much.

It was fifteen miles to Newton; to cover that distance with a team, to do the chores and handle money—that was a man's job. To be trusted with it was a huge satisfaction (68).

In Newton, Jethro is badgered by a local man, Guy Wortman, about his brother's choice to join the Southern army. Jethro sticks up for Bill and his family like a grown man and manages to keep himself under control. When he finally gets home, he tells his parents everything that happened instead of keeping it to himself.

The second way Jethro shows maturity is the way he takes all of the responsibilities of the farm after his father has a heart attack. He is eleven years old and he has to work with the strength of a man of thirty. This one quote from the book explains a lot:

If someone had asked Jethro to name the time when he left childhood behind him, he might have named that last week of March in 1862. He had learned a great deal about men and their unpredictable behavior the day he drove alone to Newton; now he was to learn what it meant to be the man of the family at ten (92).

He manages everything: the farm, the fields, everything. Never once does he complain to his parents about the work he has to do. That shows strength of his heart. He doesn't want to set a burden for his parents.

The third way Jethro shows much maturity was how he deals with Eb. Eb is one of his cousins who went off to war in the beginning with Jethro's brother Tom. Tom died on May 10, 1863. After Tom's death, Eb is sick of the war and he deserts. Government men come to the Creightons to warn them that Eb has deserted. They tell them that if they help Eb at all they will be tried in a court and punished the same way as Eb. A few weeks later Jethro is plowing the field and he hears someone calling his name. He goes into the woods and sees it's Eb. For the next week, although he knows he shouldn't, he feeds Eb and brings him food and blankets. He keeps the whole thing a secret. He feels bad about breaking the law, so he writes Abe Lincoln a letter explaining his problem. Mr. Lincoln writes back and sets up a plan for deserters to rejoin the army. Eb ends up going back to the war without a serious punishment. Jethro shows maturity by being able to handle that responsibility.

These are just three ways Jethro matures through the progress of the war. Many things happen and they cause him to think and grow, mentally and physically. I did not really enjoy this book, but I liked the way the characters changed throughout the book.

Response to Across Five Aprils

I recently read the book *Across Five Aprils* by Irene Hunt. This book takes place in southern Illinois on a farm during the civil war. The main character is a nine-year-old boy named Jethro. Throughout this book, he is faced with many difficult aspects of the war. He feels pressured to work well on the farm and take up all the responsibilities of being the only boy/man to work on the farm after his brothers leave for the war and his father has a heart attack. During the events that happen throughout this book and the war, Jethro matures a lot. He's able to take up the responsibilities of becoming a man. He shows his maturity these three ways.

*Clear context
includes brief plot
summary*

Focus on character change

The first time Jethro shows a great amount of maturity is when his father allows him to go to Newton all by himself. He hitches up their wagon and rides fifteen miles into town. It gives him a great feeling to know that his father trusts him that much.

*First example
supports focus with
reference to text and
citation*

It was fifteen miles to Newton; to cover that distance with a team, to do the chores and handle money—that was a man's job. To be trusted with it was a huge satisfaction (68).

In Newton, Jethro is badgered by a local man, Guy Wortman, about his brother's choice to join the Southern army. Jethro sticks up for Bill and his family like a grown man and manages to keep himself under control. When he finally gets home, he tells his parents everything that happened instead of keeping it to himself.

Maturity

The second way Jethro shows maturity is the way he takes all of the responsibilities of the farm after his father has a heart attack. He is eleven years old and he has to work with the strength of a man of thirty. This one quote from the book explains a lot:

*Second example
supports focus
with reference to
text and citation*

If someone had asked Jethro to name the time when he left childhood behind him, he might have named that last week of March in 1862. He had learned a great deal about men and their unpredictable behavior the day he drove alone to Newton; now he was to learn what it meant to be the man of the family at ten (92).

He manages everything: the farm, the fields, everything. Never once does he complain to his parents about the work he has to do. That shows strength of his heart. He doesn't want to set a burden for his parents.

Maturity

The third way Jethro shows much maturity was how he deals with Eb. Eb is one of his cousins who went off to war in the beginning with Jethro's brother Tom. Tom died on May 10, 1863. After Tom's death, Eb is sick of the war and he deserts. Government men come to the Creightons to warn them that Eb has deserted. They tell them that if they help Eb at all they will be tried in a court and punished the same way as Eb. A few weeks later Jethro is plowing the field and he hears someone calling his name. He goes into the woods and sees it's Eb. For the next week, although he knows he shouldn't, he feeds Eb and brings him food and blankets. He keeps the whole thing a secret. He feels bad about breaking the law, so he writes Abe Lincoln a letter explaining his problem. Mr. Lincoln writes back and sets up a plan for deserters to rejoin the army. Eb ends up going back to the war without a serious punishment. Jethro shows maturity by being able to handle that responsibility.

**Third example
supports focus
with specific
references to text**

These are just three ways Jethro matures through the progress of the war. Many things happen and they cause him to think and grow, mentally and physically. I did not really enjoy this book, but I liked the way the characters changed throughout the book.

Score Point 4

This response meets the criteria for score point 4. The context is clear, and the focus centers on specific change in the main character, Jethro. The examples are elaborated with concrete details and build to support the writer's point about Jethro's learning maturity. The conclusion is adequate but does not address a bigger idea.

Conventions – Score Point 3

The writing shows control of grade-level conventions.

A Response to The Diary of Anne Frank

I have been reading The Diary of Anne Frank. It is a diary written by Anne Frank. Anne and her family are Jewish people go into hiding. This is in World War II. This book is a diary that she wrote when she was in hiding. I don't think reading a diary is as interesting as reading a fiction book.

One example of this is when Anne talks about her fountain pen from her grandmother. It is really big and has a good tip on it, so she likes her handwriting. It was her favorite pen. She doesn't have another pen that she likes as much. She doesn't have anything to do but write, and then her pen fell in the fire. Talking about a pen isn't something you'd hear about in a fiction book.

The next example of this is when Anne tells what they are eating. On page 50, Anne talks about how sausage is made, then watches it. I can't believe that Anne tells how sausage is made because she is in hiding and food is really important. She is very bored. You would not read how sausage is made in a fiction book because it is so boring.

The last example of this is when Anne talks to Peter. Peter is the boy that she likes who also lives in the secret annex. She goes on and on about how much she likes Peter. From page 133 to the end of the diary she talks about Peter at least every other day. As a male reader, it is very boring. She said she wouldn't even talk to Peter if they weren't in hiding.

That is why reading a fiction book is more interesting than reading a diary. I didn't like this book because Anne keeps talking about the same things. It is worth reading because it tells exactly how stuff happened. This book is easy to connect to the real world because going into hiding was something that really happened in WWII.

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Context

Focus is personal response

One example of this is when Anne talks about her fountain pen from her grandmother. It is really big and has a good tip on it, so she likes her handwriting. It was her favorite pen. She doesn't have another pen that she likes as much. She doesn't have anything to do but write, and then her pen fell in the fire. Talking about a pen isn't something you'd hear about in a fiction book.

Some specific, concrete details support focus

The next example of this is when Anne tells what they are eating. On page 50, Anne talks about how sausage is made, then watches it. I can't believe that Anne tells how sausage is made because she is in hiding and food is really important. She is very bored. You would not read how sausage is made in a fiction book because it is so boring.

Commentary is all personal response, not analysis

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References to text are not supported by citations

That is why reading a fiction book is more interesting than reading a diary. I didn't like this book because Anne keeps talking about the same things. It is worth reading because it tells exactly how it happened. This book is easy to connect to the real world because going into hiding was something that really happened in WWII.

Annotations on next page

Score Point 3

This response to text shows some evidence of analysis of author's craft in its examples and commentary. However, the writer's personal response overshadows the attempt at analysis. It is organized coherently with some specific references to text but no direct citations. Language is appropriate but not effective.

Conventions – Score Point 3

The writing shows control of grade-level conventions.

Of Mice and Men

In this book *Of Mice and Men*, the author John Steinbeck uses many symbolic themes. The one that I saw him use in the story most frequently was loneliness. His portrayal of the characters, helped me to realize how lonely they really were. When Candy loses the only friend he really had is an example of this.

Candy said. "George." "Huh?" "I ought to
of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't
ought to of let no stranger shoot My dog" (pg 61)

As you can see Candy was really lonely, but he couldn't bring himself to shoot the dog even though the dog was suffering. However he wasn't the only one that had a lonely life. Another example of this is Curley's wife:

"Why can't I talk to you? I never get to
talk to nobody. I get awful lonely." (pg 86)

She was lonely throughout the whole book. She didn't have any girls to talk to, and if she talked to any of the guys on the ranch she would get in trouble by her husband. Another character that I think was lonely was the stable buck, Crooks.

"Come on in and set a while, Crooks said.

Long as you won't get out and let me alone." (pg 86)

The others at the ranch left him alone and he even bunked by himself because he was the only black person there, on the ranch.

As you can see the characters in this story faced a lot of loneliness. Why I think that John Steinbeck made so many lonely characters was to show how people today how people thought and felt during the great depression.

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Limited context

Thematic focus

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 of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn’t
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As you can see Candy was really lonely, but he couldn’t bring himself to shoot the dog even though the dog was suffering. However he wasn’t the only one that had a lonely life. Another example of this is Curely’s wife:

Transition to second example

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She was lonely throughout the whole book. She didn’t have any girls to talk to, and if she talked to any of the guys on the ranch she would get in trouble by her husband. Another character that I think was lonely was the stable buck, Crooks.

Third example supports focus

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As you can see the characters in this story faced a lot of loneliness. Why I think that John Steinbeck made so many lonely characters was to s how people today how people thought and felt during the great depression.

Conclusion provides an attempt at connecting to a bigger idea

Score Point low 3

This response is a benchmark for the lowest score point 3. The analytical focus supported with three clear examples, each with a commentary connected back to the focus, keeps the writing above a score point 2. However, the lack of overall context and elaboration affect the clarity of the piece.

Conventions – Score Point 2

The writing demonstrates inconsistent control of conventions, with a mistake in nearly every line, as well as a lack of appropriate paragraphing.

The Giver

The Giver is about a boy named Jonas that lives in a community in the future. He lives a regular life like all the other people until he becomes the Giver's apprentice, then it all changes for him.

The community is different from today's society because of sameness and the Giver. Sameness is a think that the community made up so that nothing is bad. Everything is the same and nothing that happens is unexpected or wrong. For example, there are no feelings, the climate is always the same, it is never hot or cold. The food is artificially grown, cooked in the kitchen and always delivered to your house. They can't see colors. There is no pain, and if there is you can take a pill for instant relief.

The family is made by the committee of elders. In order for you to have a spouse, you have to apply. Then, in order for you to have kids that are born by designated birth mothers, you have to apply. Everyone's birthday is on the same day at the same time no matter how old you are. You don't celebrate and it isn't even called a birthday, it is called the ceremony of however old you are. In other words, if you were twelve it would be the ceremony of twelve. This happens every December. The family is only temporary and they don't even really have feelings for each other like we do. The family doesn't stay together. When your kids grow up you go to the house of childless parents, then you go to the house of the old, and then you have a party and celebrate your release. Release means "to be killed", and the only way to remember your parents is to look them up in the hall of old records.

Release is not something to be ashamed of if you were a newborn or an elder from the house of the old, but is was a disgrace for you to be released if you were of middle

age and broke the community rule three times. A newborn was released if it didn't meet the standard requirements.

The only two people in the story that were different were Jonas and the Giver because they held the pain, happiness, colors and everything that the other people didn't have. When Jonas found out the truth about release, that it was really death, he decided to leave the community. When Jonas found out that Gabriel, a newborn he loved was going to be released he decided to leave early and run away with him.

In my opinion the community was one that I would not like to live in because they are really missing out on all the happiness in life by getting rid of all pain. For example, they can't go snow boarding, or snowmobiling because they got rid of snow because it had a potential of pain. They got rid of heat so they couldn't go for a swim to cool down because they don't even get hot. They won't let you out of the community unless you are on a field trip to see another community, therefore I would like to live now and enjoy life while I can.

The Giver

The Giver is about a boy named Jonas that lives in a community in the future. He lives a regular life like all the other people until he becomes the Giver's apprentice, then it all changes for him. ← *Stated focus not supported by text*

The community is different from today's society because of sameness and the Giver. Sameness is a think that the community made up so that nothing is bad. Everything is the same and nothing that happens is unexpected or wrong. For example, there are no feelings, the climate is always the same, it is never hot or cold. The food is artificially grown, cooked in the kitchen and always delivered to your house. They can't see colors. There is no pain, and if there is you can take a pill for instant relief.

Paragraph has listed details about the community

The family is made by the committee of elders. In order for you to have a spouse, you have to apply. Then, in order for you to have kids that are born by designated birth mothers, you have to apply. Everyone's birthday is on the same day at the same time no matter how old you are. You don't celebrate and it isn't even called a birthday, it is called the ceremony of however old you are. In other words, if you were twelve it would be the ceremony of twelve. This happens every December. The family is only temporary and they don't even really have feelings for each other like we do. The family doesn't stay together. When your kids grow up you go to the house of childless parents, then you go to the house of the old, and then you have a party and celebrate your release. Release means "to be killed", and the only way to remember your parents is to look them up in the hall of old records.

Listed details about the community, no reference to Jonas or the Giver

Release is not something to be ashamed of if you were a newborn or an elder from the house of the old, but it was a disgrace for you to be released if you were of middle age and broke the community rule three times. A newborn was released if it didn't meet the standard requirements.

Listed details about the community, no reference to Jonas or the Giver

The only two people in the story that were different were Jonas and the Giver because they held the pain, happiness, colors and everything that the other

First reference to characters in stated focus

people didn't have. When Jonas found out the truth about release, that it was really death, he decided to leave the community. When Jonas found out that Gabriel, a newborn he loved was going to be released he decided to leave early and run away with him.

Paragraph does not mention Jonas' relationship to the Giver

In my opinion the community was one that I would not like to live in because they are really missing out on all the happiness in life by getting rid of all pain. For example, they can't go snow boarding, or snowmobiling because they got rid of snow because it had a potential of pain. They got rid of heat so they couldn't go for a swim to cool down because they don't even get hot. They won't let you out of the community unless you are on a field trip to see another community, therefore I would like to live now and enjoy life while I can.

Conclusion contains personal response but only to the details of the community, not the characters

Score Point 2

This response to text states a focus but does not support it in any way. The body of the writing consists of lists of background details which summarize information about the community. While it is sufficiently organized for the reader to follow the ideas, there is little evidence of analysis, and the conclusion is ineffective as well.

Conventions – Score Point 3

The writing demonstrates control of grade-level conventions.

My Response to Literature

I have read many books, but this one I've read recently, caught my attention and it made me more involved in the book. The book is called The Wild Kid and the author, Harry Mazer can create characters that can make a very engaging plot.

It's about a kid named Sammy who has a light case of Down's syndrome. One night, he was being bad and for a punishment, his mom made him go outside. Feeling mad that he didn't deserve the punishment, he decides to run away on his bike, but unexpectedly, everything goes wrong with a domino effect. His bike gets stolen, he gets chased into the woods, it starts raining out, and he can't find his way back, so he is forced to sleep in the wilderness, cold and wet. On the next morning, he again tries to find his way back out of the woods, but on his way he stumbles across a hidden cave. The inhabiter of the cave runs out after Sammy, catch's him and decides to hold him prisoner rather than killing him. This person first becomes his worst enemy, but eventually they somehow become friends.

Though this book was probably meant for younger readers, I think this book would be good for readers young and old.

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Attempted focus

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Summary of events of plot; no connection to attempted focus

Though this book was probably meant for younger readers, I think this book would be good for readers young and old.

Score Point 2

This response is more like a book report, in that it is a summary of the plot with a bit of personal response in the conclusion. The elaboration is limited to lists of details.

Conventions – Score Point 3

The writing demonstrates control of grade-level conventions.

Chicken Soup for a Teenage Soul

In each story there was one main character, usually telling from 3rd person point of view.

All these stories were taken place between the 1980's and the 1990's. They talked about how their life is. One of my favorite stories is called Someone should have taught him. This story was about a girl going to a party and being smart and not drinking like everyone else, and after the party she was driving home, not drunk, a truck came head-on and hit her car, and as she lay on to pavement with all the police men around her, they tell her family she is dead. Her parents say that if the driver of the truck would have learned not to drink that she might still be alive.

This story is very sad, but there is just something about it that makes me really like it.

The rest of the stories are sad too, but some of them are funny, exciting and some of the events that happen in the stories are very predictable, but some are surprising.

The title of the book does not reflect the stories, but in a way it does. These stories help you see how bad, drugs, alcohol and other things are, the stories are good for you, and chicken soup is good if you have a cold.

Personally I enjoyed this book. It was interesting, and true. You should read it.

Chicken Soup for a Teenage Soul

In each story there was one main character, usually telling form 3rd person point of view.

No introduction, context, or focus

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Summary of story lacks coherence in places

This story is very sad, but there is just something about it that makes me really like it.

The rest of the stories are sad too, but some of them are funny, exciting and some of the events that happen in the stories are very predictable, but some are surprising.

Lack of coherence →

The title of the book does not reflect the stories, but in a way it does. These stories help you see how bad, drugs, alcohol and other things are, the stories are good for you, and is chicken soup is you have a cold.

Personally I enjoyed this book. It was interesting, and true. You should read it.

Score Point 1

This piece of limited writing shows no evidence of purposeful organization, no introduction and no context. The one summary lacks coherence, as does the attempted explanation about the title of the book.

Conventions – Score Point 1

The writing has multiple errors of different types that interfere with the meaning.